

MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING: THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING STAFF

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Abstract: The paper explains the perceptions and challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning. And validated the problem why teachers have the difficulty in implementing the modular distance learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It also will give the idea of the different perceptions and challenges encountered by the teachers. The validity of the teachers' experience and responses about the implementation of modular distance learning was analyzed by weighted mean and chi-square test of the responses and relationship of the variables. The perceptions and challenges show positive responses and need great revision of the implementing guidelines of modular distance learning.

Keywords: Modular Distance Learning, Perceptions, Challenges

Introduction

The novel human coronavirus disease COVID-19 has become the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 flu pandemic (Yen-Chin et al, 2020). It wreaked havoc in the whole wide world. Thus, it made schools shut down and cancel the classroom set-up of learning which opened doors to a new modality of learning in the so-called "new normal" set-up. The educational system of the world was greatly affected in which many learners' privileges to free education had been compromised.

In solving this problem in the educational system, the education sector has had to make numerous emergency adjustments to existing practices (Talidong&Toquero, 2020; Williamson et al., 2020) to continue the provision of educational services. For the learners without any gadgets or resources, to attend online interaction classes both synchronous and asynchronous, they are provided with the learning modules which they will use for the entire school year. Southeast Asian

countries have also adopted modular systems to deliver education while prioritizing the safety of the learners (DepEd, 2020).

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines had offered two alternative distance learning modalities in which one of these is the Self-learning Module (SLM) crafted locally by the teachers nationwide. However, the development of the said modules received negative informal feedback. With such criticisms, it is easy to imagine the challenges students experienced in understanding target concepts (Sanosa, 2013).

Policy standards that were set for new modes of learning delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic stipulated that the content of the SLM use constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative pedagogical approaches (DepEd, 2019b). In designing the modules applying this policy, Bada & Olusegun (2015) stated that such an outcome could be achieved by

designing lessons that engage students in internalization, self-reflection, and real-life problem solving.

In this context, the researcher decided to conduct a study that will determine the challenges of the faculty of Mabolo National High School regarding the recently used self-learning modules, the insights, opinions, and perspectives of the teachers about the modular distance learning. The findings of the study will be the basis for the development of an action plan to revise, enhance and improve the crafted self-learning module in the ongoing learning mode of the learners in this pandemic situation.

This study is anchored on Michael Moore's Transactional Distance Theory which is used as the guiding framework to better understand the phenomena. Moore's (1993) theory of transactional distance focuses on "the universe of teacher-learner relationships that exist when learners and instructors are separated by space and/or time". Generally, this theory shows interrelationship among the three variables such as structure, dialogue, and learner autonomy, and how interactions of these variables will affect the intensity and quality of transactional distance.

Moore's theory "has both psychological dimensions of distance, in terms of connectedness, and one that describes the efficiency of interactions in reducing miscommunications around dialogue and learning experience" (Shearer, 2010, p.1).

The first factor of Moore's theory refers to more than two-way communication, but considers all forms of interaction, "within the context of clearly defined educational targets, cooperation and understanding on the part of the teacher, and, ultimately, it culminates in solving the

learners' problems" (Giossos et al., 2009, p. 2). The second factor Moore (1997) refers to is the nature of the course structure, which is described as the level of course's rigidity or flexibility. This factor includes aspects such as the extent to which course goals and objectives are pre-prescribed, the pedagogical model used in teaching the course (e.g., teacher-vs. student-centered), the nature of course assessment, and the ability of the course to accommodate individual student needs (Zhang, 2003).

The third factor, learner autonomy, is contingent upon the previous two, in that it refers to the sense of both independence and interdependence perceived by learners as they engage in the course (Giossos et al., 2009, p. 2).

This study used quantitative research to find patterns and test causal relationships among the perceptions and challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of the modular distance learning.

In collecting the data needed in this study, it is projected in the second box the process in which the distribution of research instruments is included along with the appropriate statistical tools to be used in computing the gained data from the retrieved researcher questionnaires. Moreover, the findings of the study could result in a proposed intervention program for modular distance learning for teachers in Mabolo National High School as shown in the third box of Figure 1.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This section presents the related studies and literature from books, journals, electronic sources bearing significant ideas with the present study.

Quinones (2020) stated that distance learning refers to a learning delivery

modality, where learning takes place between the teachers and the learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction which this modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction.

Llego (2020) gave his definition to each of the learning modalities: Blended learning pairs face-to-face with any or a combination of online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-based Instruction; Distance learning is a form of learning that takes place between a teacher and students who are geographically separated during the course of instruction; and Homeschooling is an Alternative Delivery Mode that seeks to provide students with basic education in a home-based environment, supported by trained parents, guardians, or tutors who have received appropriate training.

In the Philippines, modular learning is currently used by all public schools because according to a survey conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd), learning through printed and digital modules emerged as the most preferred distance learning method of parents with children who are enrolled this academic year (Bernardo, 2020).

According to San Antonio (2020), the Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction, distance learning may be implemented through the following delivery modalities, namely Modular Distance Learning (Digital or Printed), Online Distance Learning, TV-Video (SLM-based or MELCs Mapped)/Radio-based Instruction, and Blended Distance Learning; of all the alternative learning modalities offered, most students prefer to use the “modular” distance learning option (Malipot, 2020).

Along with modalities, San Antonio (2020) provided the following descriptions and consideration for modular distance learning:

1. A learner may adopt either Digital Modular Distance Learning (DMDL) or Printed Modular Distance Learning (PMDL). Learners with devices at home like laptop, desktop, or tablet, may adopt DMDL. The Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) in different digital formats such as flat PDF, education videos, audio lessons, e-SLMs, and others may be stores in a CD/DVD/USB flash drive/pen drive while the printed SLM shall be used by learners adopting PMDL.
2. Self-learning Modules which are K to 12 compliants are developed following the Alternative Delivery Mode Learning Resources Standards. The SLMs are designed to provide ample time for mastery and sufficient practice to ensure that the targeted Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) are achieved. Clearly defined goals are attainable within the specific time frame by taking into consideration the learners’ learning capacity based on their grade level.
3. Learners shall be provided with the suggested time frame to work on their assigned tasks. Flexibility in finishing each module is accorded to learners with respect to their learning needs, characteristics, and level of understanding to ensure that

they have secured mastery of learning contents which is also an essential prerequisite for success in the succeeding modules.

4. Monitoring of learner progress and setting up of a feedback mechanism shall be ensured to help learners meet the Most Essential Learning Competencies while seeing the connection of one lesson to the next to reinforce the coherence of the curriculum.

5. Timely and appropriate monitoring and feedback for consultation and intervention purposes shall be put in place through various touch points such as text messaging, and audio/video calls, whichever is accessible to the learner. If possible and allowed, face-to-face interaction may be utilized for this purpose.

6. Members of the family and other stakeholders within the community who are trained as learning facilitators shall be engaged to provide learners with instructional support as needed in the absence of a classroom teacher.

The Department of Education is hopeful that schools can become less focused on written modules as a method of providing lessons remotely to pupils, citing high prices and a detrimental effect on the environment (Bernardo, 2020). Despite teachers' attempts

to collect money, Secretary Briones urged the public not to give in to demands for cash donations for the ostensible production of self-learning modules (Magsino, 2020).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study examined modular distance learning: the challenges of teacher staff. It investigated the challenges encountered by the teachers in the implementation of modular distance learning.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teachers in terms of:
 - a. Gender; and
 - b. Age?
2. What are the perceptions of the teachers toward modular distance learning?
3. What are the challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning?
4. Is there a significant difference between the perceptions and challenges of the teachers toward modular distance learning?
5. What intervention program can be proposed based on the findings?

Results and Discussion

The analysis interprets the data to answer the corresponding problems raised in this study. The findings are presented in tabular data. It shows the challenges encountered by the teachers in the implementation of the modular distance learning

Table 1
Gender Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Total	Percentage
Male	4	33.33
Female	8	66.67
Total	12	100.00

Table 1 shows the gender profile of the respondents. It reveals that out of 12 teachers in Mabolo National High School, the total number of males was 4 with a percentage of 33.33 while for the female was 8 with a percentage of 66.67.

It implies that most of the respondents are female.

Table 2
Age Profile of the Respondents

Age	Total	Percentage
46 – 53	1	8.33
38 – 45	4	33.33
30 – 37	5	41.67
22 – 29	2	16.67

Table 2 shows the age profile of the respondents. It reveals that most of the respondents are between the age of 30-37 with the total number of 5 and a percentage of 41.67, followed by the age of 38-45 with the percentage of 33.33, then age of 22-29 with the percentage of 16.67, and 46-53 with the percentage of 8.33.

Table 3

Perceptions of the Teachers toward the Modular Distance Learning

Incentives	Total	Rating	Description
1. Teachers utilize their time on having advance and additional information from their heads.	47	3.92	A
2. The Modular Distance Learning Approach improves student's critical thinking skills.	31	2.58	D
3. Learners become more independent in studying and answering activities on their own.	36	3.00	MA
4. Students make use of their time most on studying the given modules.	31	2.58	D
5. It would be easy for the teacher to explain thoroughly the lessons indicated in the modules.	34	2.83	MA
6. Things are getting easier for the teachers.	36	3.00	MA

7. MDLA creates learners to be more collaborative with their classmates in online discussion.	34	2.83	MA
8. Through MDLA teachers observe those students who are working hard with their activities.	36	3.00	MA
9. Teachers could not easily recognize students who perform well.	46	3.83	A
10. MDLA helps improve teachers' teaching techniques, skill and understanding.	35	2.92	MA

Table 3 reveals the perceptions of the teachers toward modular distance learning. The table shows that most of the responses are moderately agree such as learners become more independent in studying and answering activities on their own, it would be easy for the teacher to explain thoroughly the lessons indicated in the modules, things getting easier for the teachers, Modular Distance Learning Approach creates learners to be more collaborative with their classmate in online discussion, through Modular Distance Learning Approach teachers observe those students who are working hard with their activities, and Modular Distance Learning Approach helps improve teachers teaching techniques, skills and understanding.

Table 3 also have two responses for agree such as teachers utilizing their time on having advance and additional information from their heads and teachers could not easily recognize students who perform well; and another two disagree such as Modular Distance Learning Approach improves student's critical thinking skills and student makes use of their time most on studying and answering activities on their own.

It implies that the perception of the teachers is slightly positive towards modular distance learning. Even before the time of pandemic, the need for upskilling and professional development has never been exhaustive (Omar & Hashim, 2021). It is also stated that the respondents' relatively high scores of perceived usefulness state a more open perception of embracing current instructional technologies and educational trends on top of their conventional teaching routine and methods. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Nursalina&Fitrawati (2021) found that most teachers have positive perceptions about online learning media.

Teachers who view distance learning as a useful tool or an opportunity for the continuation of education during lockdown would lead to a more positive acceptance of using

distance learning tools in their lessons (Omar & Hashim, 2021; Nursalina&Fitrawati, 2021; Foti, 2020; Orhan &Beyhan, 2020; Alea et al., 2020)

Table 4
Challenges of the Teachers toward the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

Incentives	Total	Rating	Description
1. Establishing communication with the students.	43	3.58	A
2. Having unstable internet access intended for online consultation.	48	4.00	A
3. Giving instructions and responding to queries through e-mail and messages.	49	4.08	A
4. Time-management in conducting classes and monitoring of responses.	43	3.58	A
5. Beating the deadline set by school.	49	4.08	A
6. Students who are poor in comprehension. Who hardly understands what is written on the modules.	51	4.25	SA
7. Managing the stress caused by community quarantine at home and between online class demands.	47	3.92	A

8. Availability of students.	44	3.67	A
9. The plagiarism and credibility problems.	49	4.08	A
10. Inappropriate approaches to the teachers of the students if they do not understand their module.	45	3.75	A

Table 4 shows the challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning. The table reveals that almost all of the responses are agree such as establishing communication with the students, having unstable internet access intended for online consultation, giving instructions and responding queries through e-mail and messages, time-management in conducting classes and monitoring of responses, beating the deadline set by school, managing the stress caused by community quarantine at home and between online class demands, availability of students, the plagiarism and credibility problems, and inappropriate approaches to the teachers of the students if they do not understand their module. Hence, only one response shows strongly in which students who are poor in comprehension, who hardly understand what are written on the modules.

It implies that the teacher has a great positive challenge towards the implementation of modular distance learning.

Table 5
Perceptions and Challenges of the Teachers Toward the Modular Distance Learning

Indicator	n	Computed Value	Tabled Value	Remarks
Perception	12	3.44	9.49	Not Significant
Challenges	12			

Table 5 shows the relationship between the perception and challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning. It reveals that the computed value of 3.44 is less than the tabled value of 9.49, hence, not significant which means there is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers toward modular distance learning and the challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning.

It implies that there is enough evidence to show that the perception of the teachers has a bearing on their challenges towards the implementation of modular distance learning.

Findings

1. Most of the teacher respondents in Mabolo National High School are females
2. Most of the teacher respondents are in the age range of 30-37.
3. Perceptions of the teachers are slightly positive towards modular distance learning.
4. The teachers have a great positive challenge towards the implementation of modular distance learning.
5. There is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers toward modular distance learning and the challenges of the teachers toward the implementation of modular distance learning.

Conclusion

Positive responses of the perception and challenges shows great revision of the implementing guidelines of modular distance learning.

Recommendation

After thoroughly analyzing the concluded research, the following recommendations are stated below:

1. The Department of Education, Division of Cebu City will revise the implementing guidelines of modular distance learning.
2. That the school administrators will ensure that the teachers will be fully equipped with competencies in using the technologies to communicate the learners as well as the delivery of the lessons.
3. That the teachers will gain new strategies and approaches to effectively communicate with the learners whose modalities are printed modules.
4. That the learners will communicate with the teachers and comply with the activities found in the module sincerely.
5. That the parents will support their learners in this modular distance learning delivery.
6. That the researcher will be able to provide a proposed program that can benefit both the teacher and learners of Mabolo National High School.
7. That the future researcher will be able to conduct a research regarding the effectiveness of the module and sustainability of the implementation of the modular distance learning.

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